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Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers
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FUTURE MARP MEETINGS
Zoom Meeting, Dec 11
Thursday. 5:00 pm
Alex Elsea, MDOT, Speaker

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Amtrak NexGen Acela Debuts

Amtrak NexGen Acela trainset on display at Philadelphia. (Amtrak photo)

On August 28, 2025, the first Amtrak NexGen Acela trainset began operating on the Northeast Corridor linking Washington, New York, and Boston. The electric trains, called the "NextGen Acelas", have a capacity about 25 percent greater per trainset than the existing Acelas and can operate at a maximum of 160 miles per hour, 10 miles an hour faster. The first train was preceded by a celebration at Washington Union Station involving US Transportation Secretary Duffy and Amtrak officials.

Service began at 5:00 a.m. ET in Washington, DC, and at 6:00 a.m. ET in Boston for travel on the Northeast Corridor. The new trains were identified by a special cryptogram in the Amtrak reservation system to enable passengers to select the new trains for their travel. For the first time since Acela's original debut in December 2000, new premium high-speed trainsets are now operating on the Northeast Corridor.

The first schedule consisted of two round trips on week days and Sundays and one round trip on Saturdays. The $2.35 billion project, will deliver a total of 28 train sets, which will be phased into operation service through 2027.

The cars are equipped with free high-speed WiFi, USB ports, power outlets, and reading lights at every seat. Early reviewers report that ride is exceptionally smooth and the restrooms roomy, but the seats are hard and the windows do not align with the seats in many cases.

The new electric equipment was manufactured by Alstrom, a French company, at Alstrom's Hornell, NY, facility by union labor. The 28 new trainsets are made up of 252 coaches and 56 locomotives. based on Alstrom's, Avelia Liberty™ trainsets that bring world-class technology, developed from decades of experience on Europe's high-speed networks.

Parts and components are sourced from a U.S. supply chain of more than 180 companies across 29 states.

Royal Oak, Michigan

Be it ever so simple. The Amtrak station at Royal Oak, Michigan, on September 13, 2025. The station handles 24,000 passengers a year on the six Pontiac-Detroit-Chicago trains.

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The Michigan Passenger welcomes your comments and submissions on passenger rail issues. Comments, articles, and other materials sent for publication should be sent by email to jhguidinger1@yahoo.com. Clippings from newspapers, magazines, and electronic sources must include the publication's name and date. Photos sent by email must be in .jpg format. We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

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MICHIGAN SERVICES

Amtrak Train Schedules
Effective November 1, 2025
Chicago-Kalamazoo-Ann Arbor-Detroit-Pontiac
Chicago-Kalamazoo-East Lansing-Port Huron

Read Down ↓ / Read Up ↑

Wolverine Service	Wolverine Service	Blue Water	Wolverine Service	Mile		Train Name		Wolverine Service	Blue Water	Wolverine Service	Wolverine Service
350	352	364	354			Train Number		351	365	353	355
Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily			Days of Operation		Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily
6:45a	2:15p	4:00p	5:50p	*0*	Dp	CHICAGO, IL, Un Sta (CT)	Ar	10:32a	11:45a	2:02p	10:40p
7:11a	↓	↓	↓	*16*		Hammond-Whiting, IN (CT)	↑	↑	↑	1:15p	9:54p
9:04a	4:31p	6:10p	8:04p	*62*		New Buffalo, MI (ET)			11:24a	1:21p	10:02p
9:29a	4:52p	6:32p	8:24p	*89*		Niles, MI			11:04a	1:01p	9:42p
9:40a	↓	6:43p	↓	*102*		Dowagiac, MI			10:52a	↑	9:29p
10:14a	5:26p	7:11p	8:58p	*138*		Kalamazoo, MI		9:16a	10:26a	12:28p	9:00p
10:56a	6:03p	7:38p	9:35p	*160*		Battle Creek, MI		8:48a	10:00a	12:01p	8:33p
↓	↓	9:00p	↓	*208*		East Lansing, MI		↑	8:54a	↑	↑
		9:37p		*238*		Durand, MI			8:08a		
		10:08p		*256*		Flint, MI			7:35a		
		10:34p		*274*	↓	Lapeer, MI			7:08a		
		11:31p	↓	*319*	Ar	PORT HURON, MI	Dp		6:20a		
↓	↓		10:03p	*184*		Albion, MI	↑	8:15a			
11:51a	6:55p		10:28p	*208*		Jackson, MI		7:51a		10:58a	7:37p
12:28p	7:35p		11:08p	*243*		Ann Arbor, MI		7:14a		10:23a	7:00p
12:57p	8:11p		11:27p	*271*		Dearborn, MI		6:44a		9:53a	6:29p
1:25p	8:44p		12:11a	*281*		DETROIT, MI		6:26a		9:35a	6:11p
1:49p	9:05p		12:34a	*292*		Royal Oak, MI		6:03a		9:12a	5:48p
1:57p	9:12p		12:41a	*296*	↓	Troy, MI		5:56a		9:04a	5:41p
2:11p	9:29p		1:01a	*304*	Ar	PONTIAC, MI	Dp	5:43a		8:50a	5:28p

Amtrak Train Schedule
Effective October 6, 2023
Chicago-Grand Rapids

Read Down ↓ / Read Up ↑

Pere Marquette	Mile		Train Name		Pere Marquette
370			Train Number		371
Daily			Days of Operation		Daily
6:30p	*0*	Dp	CHICAGO, IL, Un Sta (CT)	Ar	9:08a
9:14p	*89*	↓	St. Joe-Benton Harbor, MI (ET)	↑	8:10a
9:50p	*116*	↓	Bangor, MI	↑	7:32a
10:33p	*151*	↓	Holland, MI	↑	6:49a
11:34p	*176*	Ar	GRAND RAPIDS, MI	Dp	6:00a

These schedules are provided for planning purposes only and may not show recent time changes.
Always consult with Amtrak at AMTRAK.COM or 1-800-USA-RAIL when making reservations.

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Join us at MARP.ORG for better trains.

Letters & emails
Responding to Amtrak-Long Island article, Summer 2025

Editor,

I am the NJ-ARP President and spent my first 38 years of life on Long Island and am familiar with Penn Station and Long Island operations. Your article on Amtrak extension to Long Island has lot of misinformation.

LIRR runs hundreds of trains per day on 9 branches to Long Island. The overwhelming majority of the 3 million Nassau and Suffolk County residents do not live near Hicksville or Ronkonkoma, which is a hamlet, essentially a commuter barn. Suffice it to say, the overwhelming majority will not take advantage of this one seat ride when there are plenty of other LIRR branches, stations, times, and both LIRR and Amtrak trains to choose from.

Amtrak's NEC Airo trains cannot operate on LIRR's electrical system at all, which is 3rd rail. Airo train locomotives will be dual-powered diesel and catenary; but have no 3rd rail shoes. The comparisons to regional service in Virginia are ridiculous. Long Island does not have urban cities, nor will these train operate beyond prime commuter territory.

Amtrak has already been told to not delay any LIRR operations. They will not get any dispatching preference. They are not projected to get to Ronkonkoma any faster than LIRR trains with stops.

Since these trains already through-run empty to and from Sunnyside Yard, they will not relieve any overcrowding in NYPS. Few people on these trains are headed to Long Island. Most travelers will not plan their day around these 3 trains.

If Amtrak wanted to do something constructive, they could coordinate with the Penn Station Control Center to arrange cross-platform transfers.

Joe Versaggi
Bridgewater, NJ

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Chuck Merckel, Coordinator (734-330-0281)

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Albion	Bus	Matthew Murawski
Ann Arbor	Amtrak	Clark Charnetski
Bangor	None	J. P. Descamp
Battle Creek	Amtrak	James Donahue
Chicago	Amtrak	Robert (Bob) Donahue
Dearborn	Amtrak	Mary Jo Durivage
Detroit	Amtrak	Greg Ptucha/Roberta Deering
Dowagiac	None	Matt Money
Durand	Museum	Mary Stone
East Lansing	Caretkr	John Boyse
Flint	Bus	Richmond Riggs
Grand Rapids	Caretkr	John Langdon
Holland	None	Nathan Nietering
Jackson	Caretkr	Tom Schindler
Kalamazoo	Caretkr	Warren Fritz
Lapeer	None	Jim Slater
New Buffalo	None	Rich Knoll
Niles	Caretkr	Jack Kessler
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Port Huron	None	T. J. Gaffney
Royal Oak	None	David Roberts
St Joseph	None	Todd Schultz
Toledo, OH	Amtrak	Vacant
Traverse City	None	Carolyn Ulstad
Troy	None	Thomas VanDeGrift
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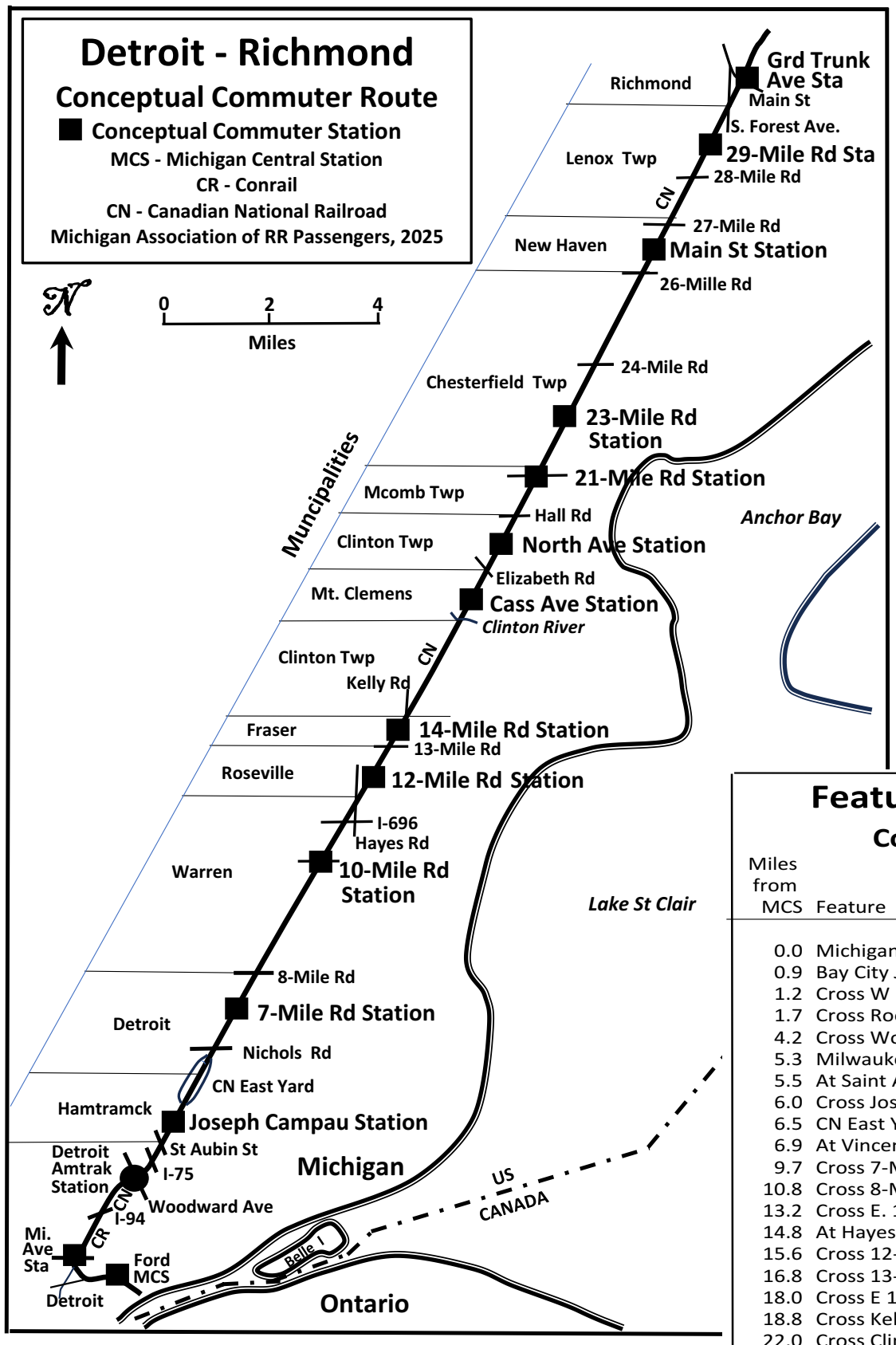
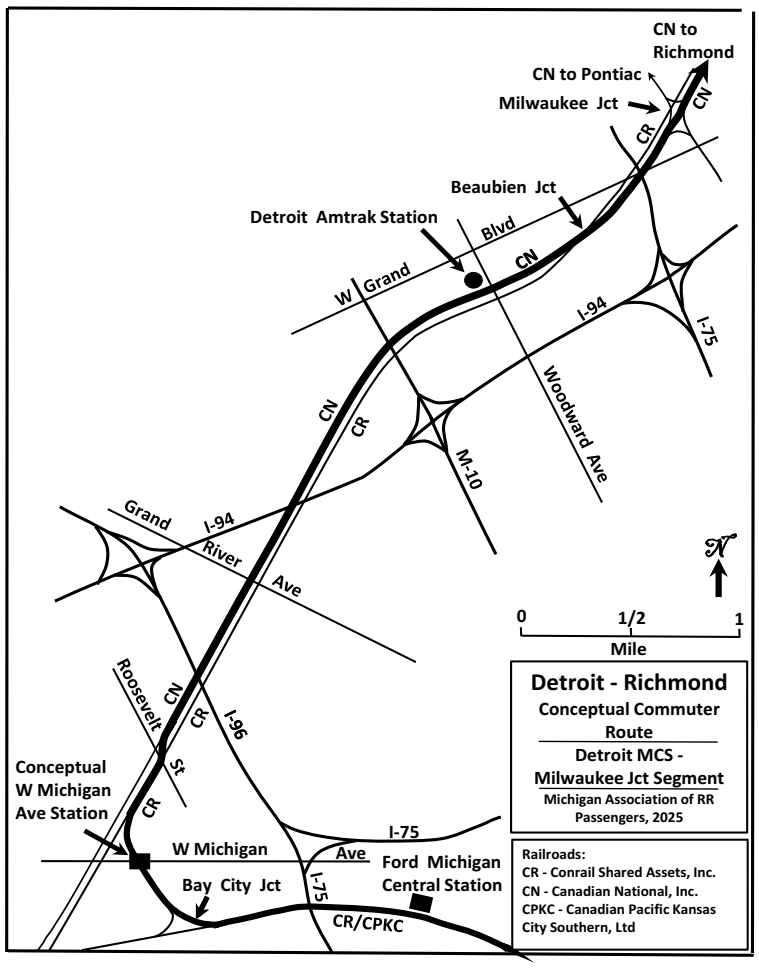
Fourth article in a series

A Detroit Area Commuter System

Possible Commuter Service Between Detroit and Richmond





Features of Detroit - Richmond Route

Conrail & Canadian National Railroad

Miles from MCS	Feature	Muncipality	Notes
0.0	Michigan Central	Detroit	Ford MCS Sta Site
0.9	Bay City Junction	Detroit	Turn north
1.2	Cross W Michigan Ave	Detroit	Conceptual Sta Site
1.7	Cross Roosevelt St	Detroit	Cross fm Conrail to CN
4.2	Cross Woodward Ave	Detroit	Detroit Amtrak Sta
5.3	Milwaukee Junction	Detroit	Former GTW Station*
5.5	At Saint Aubin St	Enter Hamtramack	
6.0	Cross Joseph Campau St	Hamtramack	Conceptual Sta Site
6.5	CN East Yard	Hamtramack	
6.9	At Vincent St	Re-Enter Detroit	
9.7	Cross 7-Mile Rd	Detroit	Conceptual Sta Site
10.8	Cross 8-Mile Rd	Enter Warren	
13.2	Cross E. 10-Mile Rd	Warren	Conceptual Sta Site
14.8	At Hayes Rd	Enter Roseville	
15.6	Cross 12-Mile Rd	Roseville	Conceptual Sta Site
16.8	Cross 13-Mile Rd	Enter Fraser	
18.0	Cross E 14-Mile Rd	Fraser	Conceptual Sta Site*
18.8	Cross Kelly Rd	Enter Clinton Twp	
22.0	Cross Clinton River	Enter Mt. Clemens	
22.6	Cross Cass Ave	Mt Clemens	Conceptual Sta Site*
23.8	Cross Elizabeth Rd	Re-Enter Clinton Twp	
24.1	Cross North Ave	Clinton Twp	Conceptual Sta Site
25.2	Cross Hall Rd	Enter Macomb Twp	
26.3	Cross 21-Mile Rd	Macomb Twp	Conceptual Sta Site
26.7	Point north of 21-Mile Rd	Enter Chesterfield Twp	
28.6	Cross 23-Mile Rd	Chesterfield Twp	Conceptual Sta Site*
32.1	Cross 26-Mile Rd	Enter New Haven	
32.9	Cross Main St	New Haven	Conceptual Sta Site*
33.9	Point North of Clark St	Enter Lenox Twp	
35.7	Cross 29-Mile Rd	Lenox Twp	Conceptual Sta Site
38.3	Cross S Forest Ave	Enter Richmond	
38.8	Grand Trunk Ave	Richmond	Conceptual Sta Site*

* Former Grand Trunk Western Railroad Station in this Town

CN - Canadian National Railroad MCS - Ford's Michigan Central Station

Introduction

This is the fourth article on a possible rail commuter system for the Detroit area. This article explores the 38.8-mile Detroit-Richmond commuter route to the northeast of Detroit. (See two maps above). Except for the first 1.7 miles in Detroit, which is owned by Conrail (CR), the line is entirely owned by Canadian National (CN).

The route is one of the oldest rail lines in Michigan, having been built by a predecessor of the Grand Trunk Western (GTW) in the late1850s and taken over by the Grand Trunk a few years later. It served as the first route for the Grand Trunk system in Canada to move trains crossing the St. Clair River on ferries at Port Huron to the rapidly growing city of Detroit. Today the railroad is primarily a single-track railroad serving many large freight customers south of Richmond, from which freight appears to move primarily to the south and onto other CN and other railroads built in the Detroit area in later years. North of Richmond, the line is of less importance today.

Previous Passenger Service

MARP is unaware of any commuter service having been operated between Detroit and Richmond. However, like all lines built in the early years, intercity passenger trains of the GTW once operated on the route between the Detroit Grand Trunk Station and Port Huron. GTW Table 34 in the November, 1920, *Official Guide* shows three daily passenger trains between Detroit and Port Huron. For the portion of the route between Detroit and Richmond, stations served included Milwaukee Junction, Fraser, Mt. Clemens, Chesterfield, New Haven, and Richmond. The masonry GTW depot in New Haven, built in 1865, remains today as a historic site. The GTW passenger trains had been discontinued by 1958 according to the October *Official Guide* of that year.

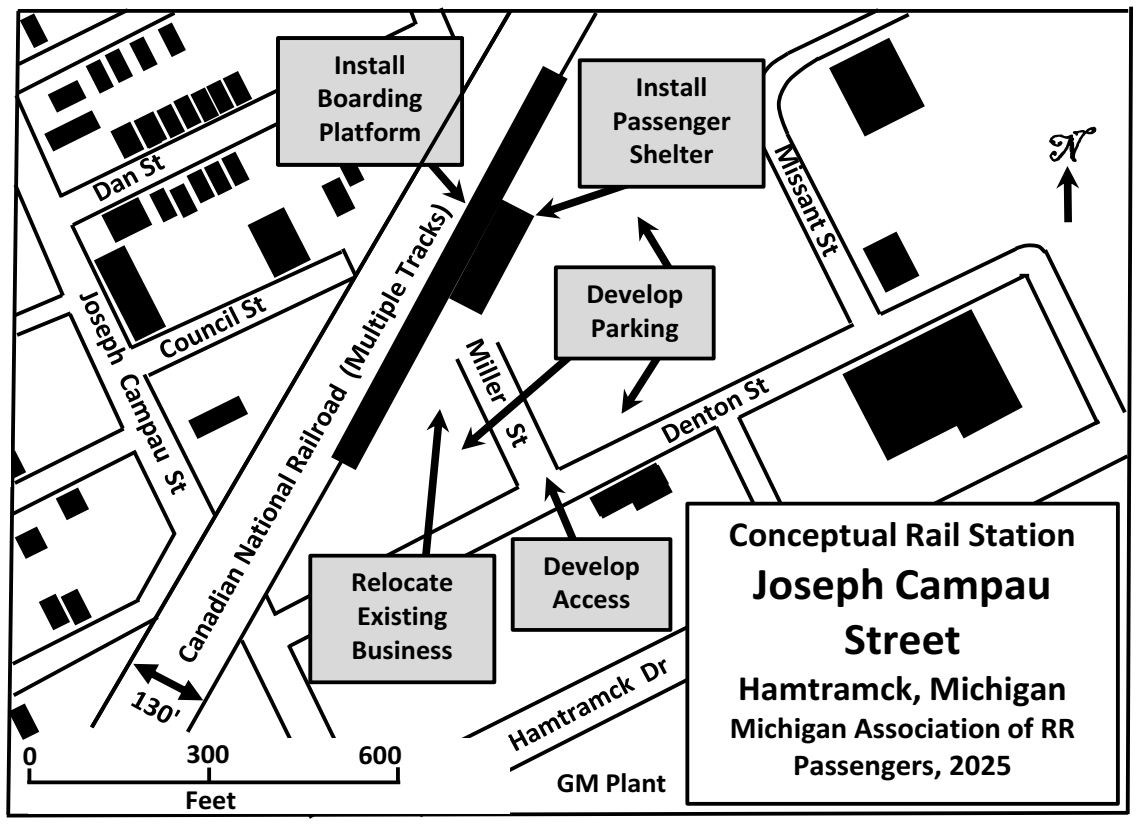
Description of Conceptual Commuter Route

The conceptual route developed here is that the proposed commuter trains would originate at either Ford's Michigan Central Station (MCS) or the Detroit Amtrak Station on Woodward Avenue. From MCS, the trains would follow Conrail to the west from MCS for 1.7 miles to the crossing of Roosevelt Street in Detroit, where the trains would move to the parallel CN line. They would then continue to the Detroit Amtrak Station on Woodward Avenue.

From the Amtrak Station, the route would proceed east and pass through Milwaukee Junction, turn to the northeast, and cross Interstate Highway 75, five miles from MCS. From this point to Richmond, the route is straight and flat with, no imposing natural features. The Clinton River is crossed

Continued on next page

Detroit Commuter System continued



on a 130-foot plate girder bridge at the south side of Mt. Clemens. No other streams of significance are crossed. Between Detroit and New Haven, the railroad is surrounded by large industrial facilities with dense residential development at greater distances.

Conceptual Commuter Operations

It is envisioned that commuter trains would operate in and out of Detroit on a schedule to be developed once commuting patterns have been identified. The goal would be to attract the greatest number of passengers to reduce road congestion while minimizing interference with CR and CN freight operations. Track and signal facilities would be adjusted or built to allow the commuter trains to operate on the existing CN system. Servicing facilities would be built at each end of the line to service the commuter train equipment. The location of conceptual commuter stations shown in the table on page 3 would be adjusted as necessary to meet commuter patterns and the availability of property for station facilities.

Conceptual Station for Joseph Campau Street Station in Hamtramck

The sketch above shows a conceptual layout for a station on the north side of the crossing of Joseph Campau Street 6.0 miles northeast of MCS. A covered passenger platform about 800 feet long and a passenger shelter would be built along the east side of the mainline track, which appears to be on the east side of the approximately 130-foot wide CN right-of-way at this location. The existing trucking and aggregate business at this location would be relocated following proper relocation procedures. Parking for the commuters would be developed on the east side of the railroad right-of-way.

Conceptual Station for Main Street Station in New Haven

The sketch below shows a conceptual site layout for a station on the north side of the crossing of Main Street in New Haven, 32.9 miles northeast of MCS. A covered passenger platform about 400 feet long and a passenger shelter would be built along the east side of the mainline track, which is a single track on CN right-of-way approximately 60 feet wide. The retail business on Main Street could be relocated if necessary. Parking for the commuters would be developed on the east side of the railroad right-of-way. The historic depot would not be disturbed.

Conclusion

Compared to the other potential commuter routes examined so far in the Detroit area, the Detroit-Richmond route appears to be free of overly complicated issues. Although the southern part of the route has considerable freight activity, the route is straightforward and simple. It is owned primarily by one railroad company. It is a direct route to Detroit in a suburban area that is growing. Adequate right-of-way width seems to exist so that an additional track could be added where needed for commuter trains. Although many preliminary studies would be necessary on a route never having had modern passenger service, it would seem that this route should be high on the list of potential commuter routes for the Detroit urban area.

Washington Union Station Adds New Track 22

Passengers board at the new southbound through-running Track 22 at Washington Union Station. (Amtrak photo)

By Hugh Gurney

As reported in an Amtrak press release of August 6, 2025, Amtrak has opened new track 22 at Washington Union Station to passengers. Track 22, which is on the lower level, is a second run-through track to the south. For years, trains originating and terminating at Washington's Union Station have utilized stub-end Tracks 7-20 while trains going through the Capital City have arrived and departed on Track 21 at the far east side of the main concourse. (Tracks 1-6 were removed in the late 1960's to make way for the DC Metro Red Line.) Tracks 7-20 are stub end tracks while Track 21 was the only run-through track leading to the First Avenue Tunnel to connect with the CSX line heading across the Potomac River to points south.

In recent years, the number of Amtrak Regional trains running to and from New York or Boston to points in Virginia and North Carolina has increased dramatically. Adding to the congestion are Virginia Railway Express (VRE) commuter trains coming and going from points in Northern Virginia. Track 22, one of eight tracks on the lower level, had always been used for storage, with no access to customers. In the past year, new rail has been installed; columns on the platform have been rehabilitated; and an escalator installed.

Watco Acquires Great Lakes Central Railroad

By Hugh Gurney

On September 2, *Progressive Railroading* reported that the US Surface Transportation Board (STB) had approved acquisition of the Great Lakes Central Railroad (GLC) by Watco Holdings, Incorporated, a Kansas corporation. In Michigan, the GLC operates 386 miles of rail connecting Ann Arbor on the south with Traverse City and Petoskey in the northwest part of the Lower Peninsula. GLC serves communities such as Howell, Durand, Owosso, Alma, Mt. Pleasant, Clare and Cadillac. Except for a short gap between Durand and Owosso, the tracks are owned by the Michigan Department of Transportation. Nationwide, Watco presently owns or controls one Class II railroad and 43 Class III railroads.

In its filing to the STB, Watco pledged to improve and modernize GLC by investing $3.7 million in the GLC network and giving GLC access to its experienced marketing team. Service to GLC customers will be streamlined since Watco already owns the Ann Arbor Railroad which originates in Toledo and connects with GLC in Ann Arbor. One railroad will now control the original Ann Arbor Railroad mainline between Toledo and Cadillac.

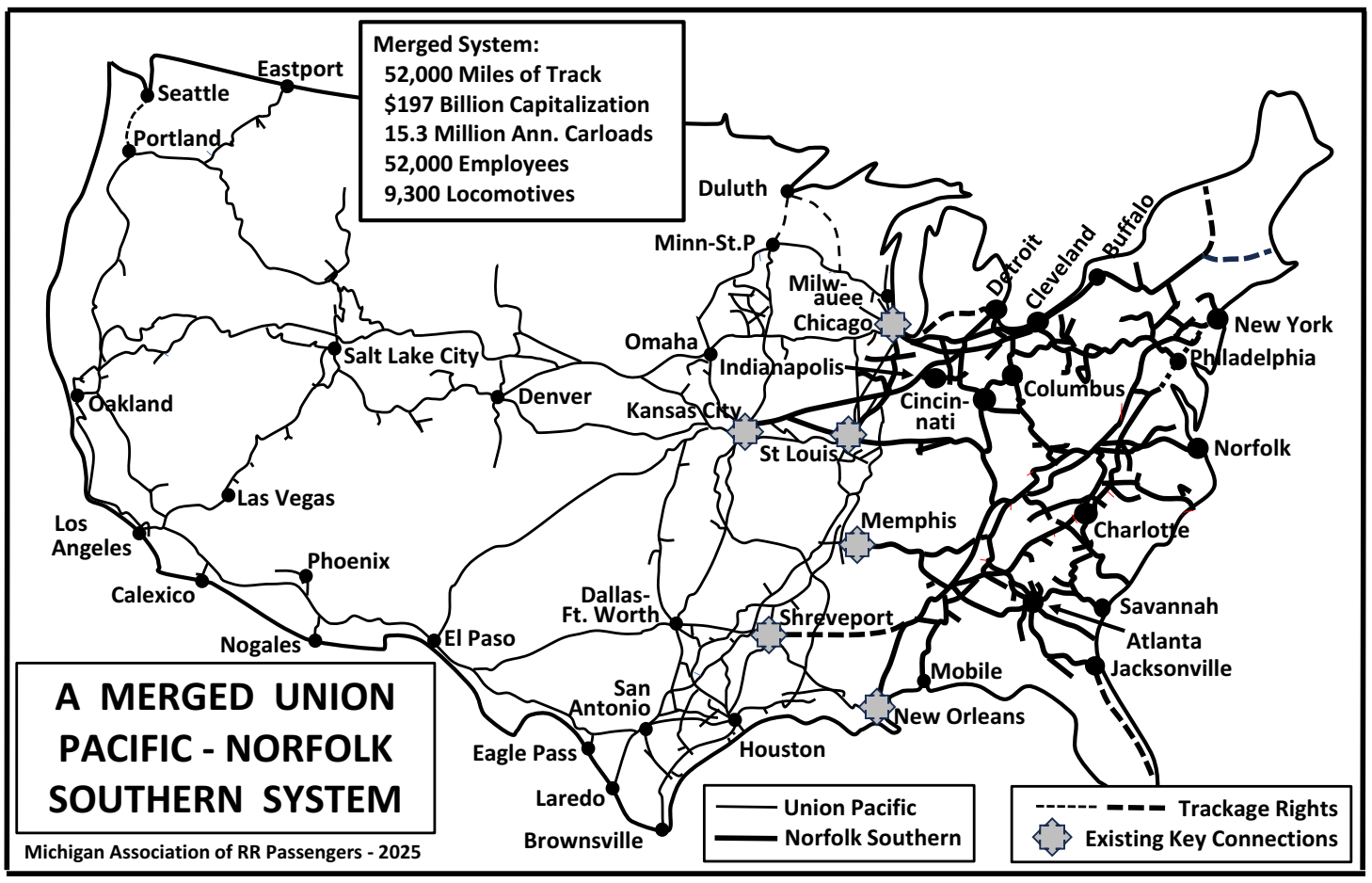
In addition to the major portion of the original Ann Arbor Railroad, GLC also operates portions of the original Pennsylvania Railroad north of Cadillac to Traverse City and Petoskey. GLC primarily connects with CSX at Howell and Canadian National at Durand. This railroad is the route for the proposed passenger trains to Traverse City and Petoskey.

The author, as an active member of the Friends of Wally in the 2010 period, could see that GLC was very supportive of the proposal to initiate commuter rail service between Howell and Ann Arbor.

A closer look

Union Pacific's Acquisition of Norfolk Southern Raises Complex Questions

The proposed acquisition of Norfolk Southern (NS) by the Union Pacific (UP) will create the first transcontinental railroad in the 190-year history of American railroads. The combined UP-NS system would be a rail behemoth with 52,000 miles of track stretching from New York to Los Angeles and Atlanta to Seattle, passing through all the major cities of the US. (See map at right.) It would likely set the other freight railroads on fire, resultimg in other mergers and the transfer of some lines to others as merger approval conditions. Proponents of the merger hope it will put the rail industry on a path to reverse years of no growth in freight volume to new growth and increased revenue.



At present, the merger would appear to have only a minor effect on Michigan freight movement. UP does not operate in Michigan and NS freight movement is concentrated only in the southeast corner of the state. NS has trackage rights on the Michigan Corridor.

The real effect on passenger services is largely unknown. If the anticipated improvements are achieved, the merger could strengthen the national rail system over which Amtrak operates. So far there have been some passenger improvements. Apparently, it doesn't look good to apply for approval from the US Surface Transportation Board (STB) with lawsuits pending against Amtrak and the public. Union Pacific on its own initiative moved to settle the lawsuit with Amtrak concerning delays to the *Sunset Limited* by agreeing to make every effort to operate the train on time. Similarly, Norfolk Southern moved to settle their lawsuit with Amtrak concerning the *Southern Cresent* and agreed to make every effort to operate this train on time.

The effect of the merger on the other US Class I railroads is still stewing. So far, the obvious merger of BNSF and CSX has been nixed by Warren Buffet of Berkshire Hathaway, the owner of BNSF in favor of a special operating agreement. Whether this will be enough remains to be seen, but merging BNSF and CSX may not be as attractive as the UP-NS merger. Keith Creel president of new merger product CPKC, has announced opposition to the merger. The position of Canadian National is not known at this time. The positions of shipping groups, rail unions, states, towns, and other interested parties are still evolving. Those opposed to the merger cite monopolistic concerns and past mergers that have gone bad.

In an interesting commentary by Jim Dodds in *Railway Age* on October 10, he states that the merger may be transformational if the railroads become better able to compete with major nationwide trucking companies, which already operate as transcontinental systems. A significant drawback of the current eastern (NS) and western (UP) rail system is the interchange between these systems. The railroads do not like to "short-haul" themselves—in other words, they want to maximize the mileage (and thus revenue) for freight hauled. The Midwest is particularly affected by this problem, because it is the borderland between the current eastern and western rail systems. As an example, rail customers in the Midwest served solely by UP who are trying to move their freight to the east find they aren't well-served (or served at all) by UP due to the short-haul distance the UP would have to accept only to hand it off to a competing carrier. Dobbs says that this creates a freight rail "service desert" in the Midwest whose void is filled by trucks. Under the merger, a single railroad would be involved and hand off situations would be greatly reduced. It has been said that Chicago would become only a crew change point.

Dodds says that the best way for the STB to manage and account for downstream merger effects will be to give shippers and rail labor a say in creating the merged system. As part of the approval process of a UP+NS merger, potentially followed by BNSF+CSX, the STB must mandate the sale of certain routes to enhance competition. He presents maps proposing the full or partial sale of certain routes. Among the buyers would be captive Class II and Class III railroads allowing them to interchange with other Class I's as a merger condition to provide competitive enhancements.

Concerning passenger service, Dodds suggests that the STB require freight railroads to improve passenger train priority or give passenger rail agencies an option to purchase entire lines or partial widths of rights-of-way to enable the construction of passenger-only lines parallel to existing freight lines.

Coaling Towers Removed

Two coaling towers were removed from the Amtrak Michigan Corridor during mid-September. The Corridor was shut down for five days during the demolition process and both the Wolverine and Blue Water trains were cancelled between September 15 and 19. The coaling towers were located over the mainline tracks in Michigan City, Indiana, and Augusta, Michigan. Alternative motor coach transportation was offered for *Wolverine* Trains 351, 352, and *Blue Water* trains 364 and 354. The *Pere Marquette*, which runs in this area on a separate CSX line, was unaffected.

The 100-foot, concrete towers were built by the Michigan Central Railroad in the 1920s and used up until the 1950s to drop coal into the tenders of steam locomotives. Amtrak received approval from the state historic preservation agencies and Indiana lawmakers for the work. Both towers were deteriorated and posed a danger to the trains passing below. A contractor pulled the towers down with grab cranes.

At right: Coaling tower over Michigan Corridor tracks near Augusta removed in mid-September of 2025. (MDOT Photo)

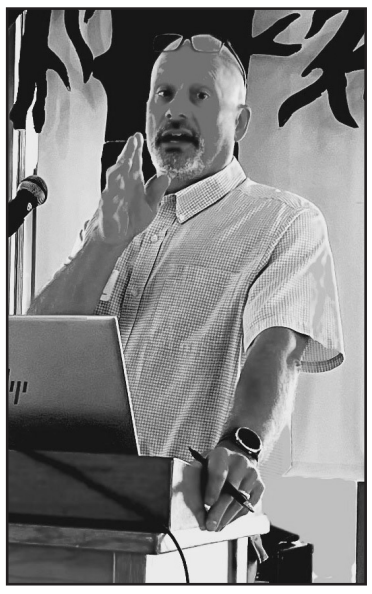
MARP Annual Meeting held in Durand Depot

The annual meeting for 2025 was held at the Durand Depot on October 18. A total of 48 people were in attendance. A hot lunch was enjoyed by all as the first order of business. Dessert was a handsome and delicious chocolate cake donated again this year by Chuck and Jeanie Merckel with an amazing image of Michigan Central Station in frosting.

MARP Chair Tom Fletcher reviewed the activities over the last year. The Station Reps and East Lansing Station Hosts (listed on page 2) were recognized and thanked for their dedicated work. Over the year MARP printed and distributed 15,600 copies of the *Michigan Passenger* and about 10,000 timetables for the Michigan trains, both of which continue to be well received by the public. Tom reviewed changes to the Executive Committee membership. Tom Fletcher and Ted Wojcik became Chair and Vice Chair after Todd Schultz and Bob Lovell resigned due to work requirements. Nick Little agreed to serve on the committee, which leaves one vacant position at present. Another change has been to split up the important role of Government Affairs into two positions. Steve Vagnozzi will concentrate on working with the Michigan Legislature and the Governor's Office. Alex Kaufman will now be our contact with MDOT and Amtrak. Tom also discussed the hiring of Robert Gleba as a part time staff member to assist with the Government Affairs efforts. Finally, MARP will try to develop back up workers for all the important jobs to allow someone to quickly step in should the current occupant be forced to leave. To that end, Nick Little and Jeff Rowe both volunteered to work with John Guidinger as assistant editors of the *Michigan Passenger.*

Tom reviewed the two Executive Committee retreats held during the year, one in Jackson on March 15 and the second in Durand on May 3, the latter with consultant and facilitator Jim Michel. The retreats were intended to strengthen MARP by developing new ideas for building membership and better focusing our advocacy efforts.

Our principal guest speaker, Kevin McKinney, discussed his extensive career in railroading. A graduate of Michigan State University, he started with the Grand Trunk Railroad as a ticket agent and convinced the railroad to open a new station in East Lansing on Farm Lane on the MSU campus. After graduation, he moved on to work at



MARP Chair Tom Fletcher

the Federal Railway Administration with the small team that planned the creation of Amtrak in May of 1971. A little over three years later he returned to Michigan and became the first MDOT rail manager under MDOT Director Jim Kellogg and Governor William Milliken. He talked about his involvement in saving the Durand Depot from demolition. Leaving MDOT in 1976, he went on to a lengthy career as shortline rail owner, operator of refrigerated rail and other express cars. Today he is Senior Editor of *Passenger Train Journal*, a magazine he started while at MSU and which he owned for 20 years.

In answer to a question, Kevin said that after all the investments in Michigan rail infrastructure over the decades we should have more trains running. He suggested new trains between Kalamazoo and Chicago, Kalamazoo and Detroit, a second train to Grand Rapids, and service between Detroit and Grand Rapids. Kevin currently resides in Pinehurst, North Carolina.

Kevin Keefe spoke briefly. He grew up in Niles, Michigan, and is very familiar with Michigan's railroads. He said that he "understands our pain" at not getting past three trains a day on our corridor after five decades. A graduate of Michigan State University, he was one of the students who helped put Locomotive 1225 back into operation in the 1970s. His career was in newspapers and he became editor of *Trains Magazine* in the 1990s. Today his name is associated with many railroad books and other publications, as well as railroad photography.

Finally. Mary Stone, Executive Director of the Michigan Railroad Museum in the Durand Depot, spoke briefly about the success they have had in receiving funding to install an at-grade pedestri-

See ***Annual meeting*** page 7

SHORT LINES

Burlington Trailways announced that it will end its intercity bus service on September 27 due to high insurance costs, uncertain relationships with its partners, and the outdated federal funding formula for supporting rural transportation services. Based in West Burlington, Iowa, the company began in 1929 as the motor-coach division of the Burlington Railroad and provided intercity bus service throughout the Midwest, including Illinois, Missouri. Indiana, and Iowa. In 2011 the company carried more than 200,000 passengers……**Hitachi Rail reported that it's Lighthouse Digital Factory opened on September 8 in Hagerstown, Maryland** to deliver transit railcars for customers in Washington DC, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. The $100M, 307,000 square-foot facility will deliver 20 railcars per month from a carbon neutral facility producing zero landfill waste and sustain an employment of 1,300 with 460 working directly for Hitachi. The new facility will contribute $350m per year to the regional economy and harness AI and smart manufacturing principles and offer next-generation manufacturing careers……..**Chicago's Metra will try new café service on their commuter trains** as reported by *Mass Transit Online* on Sept 29, 2025. A prototype Café Car has begun cycling through its busiest lines and stations to collect feedback about whether riders like the concept and what amenities they would like to see. The Rock Island Line will be the first to get this service, debuting on September 30 after which the car will be parked at LaSalle Street Station for a few days. Passengers can offer feedback in an onboard survey, earning free snacks and beverages for their opinions. To make the prototype car, Metra retrofitted one half of a coach, installing counters, stools, booths, and tables……**In Seattle the first powered light rail vehicle crossed on the tracks installed on the I-90 floating bridge.** This is the first time in the world trains under power operated across a floating bridge. A single test train crossed the Homer M. Hadley bridge on September 8 several times at increasing speeds from approximately five miles per hour up to the full operating speed of 55 mph. The test was conducted overnight so that crews could observe electrical arcing, typical in this phase of testing, between the overhead power wires and the light rail vehicle……. **North America's First Hydrogen-Powered ZEMU Passenger Train scheduled to enter service on September 13.** The San Bernardino County Transportation Authority announced on September 8 that its hybrid hydrogen fuel cell-battery electric passenger train, known as ZEMU, will begin Metrolink service on Saturday, Sept. 13. The train was start at the San Bernardino Downtown Station at 10:32 a.m. and serve riders on the nine-mile Arrow Corridor throughout the day. This ZEMU (Zero Emission Multiple Unit) is North America's first self-powered rail car using a hybrid hydrogen and battery technology to propel the train and power onboard electrical systems. Water vapor is the only emission generated from the propulsion system…….. **Effective August 25, Michigan Flyer bus expanded the number of daily roundtrips** between East Lansing, Whitmore Lake, Ann Arbor, and Detroit Metro Airport from 12 to 14. The addition of a eastbound departure at 6:30 p.m. from East Lansing will make it more convenient for MSU and U-M students and others to commute between East Lansing and Ann Arbor. The addition of a later westbound run at 11 p.m. from Detroit Metro Airport will give passengers a greater (and often cheaper) choice of flights when planning for air travel……. **Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) announced the Grand Opening of the Silver Line** will be on October 25, 2025. The 26-mile Silver Line links Plano, Richardson, Dallas, Addison, Carrollton, Coppell, and Grapevine with DFW International Airport. The service will be provided by state-of-the-art Stadler trains serving new stations and offering seamless transfers in one of the fastest growing regions in the nation…… .**The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) board voted unanimously in September to purchase up to six new rail cars** from Siemens. As reported by *Mass Transit Online*, this is a step in replacing GCRTA's existing fleet with 60 model S200 rail cars. The new cars feature two-door heights for high- and low-level platforms, a modern operator cab area, ice cutter pantographs, 52 passenger seats, four wheelchair areas, and two bicycle rack locations. Project funding comes from the Federal Transportation Administration, the Ohio Department of Transportation, the Northeast Ohio Coordinating Agency, and GCRTA……. **An official application has been filed to move the railroad out of downtown Lac-Mégantic**, Quebec, to a new12.5 km rail bypass north of the town. The bypass is the result of a 2013 tank train derailment and fire in downtown Lac-Mégantic that killed 47 people and destroyed much of the town in one of the worst railroad wrecks in Canadian history…..… **On Oct. 7, the U.S. Senate confirmed David Fink as the 16th administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration**. Fink, the former CEO of Pan Am Railway, has more than 45 years of experience in the transportation industry, and is the fifth generation of his family to work in the railroad industry. After graduating with a master's degree in logistics, he went to work for General Motors in the 1980s. Amtrak and rail transit operators approved of his appointment……. **The Senate also confirmed the nomination of Robert Gleason to the Amtrak board** in mid-September. Gleason, the former head of Pennsylvania's Republican Party, has been actively involved in pushing for increased Amtrak service. He is a U.S. Air Force active-duty veteran and reservist. Currently president of a global insurance firm, he has served as Pennsylvania's Secretary of the Commonwealth, as a member the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, and as a member the state's Transportation Commission…….**The Reading & Northern Railroad promises to fix the tracks between Pittston and Wilkes-Barre** (about 9 miles) and bring passenger service to Wilkes-Barre. According to the *Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice,* the railroad also promises to build new stations in Wilkes-Barre and Pittston. The Reading & Northern Railroad is a privately held railroad company that operates in nine counties and offers freight services and passenger excursion operations, including weekend excursions from Pittston to Jim Thorpe……**Michigan's Indian Trails Bus Company was designated the** best US bus service for 2025 by *USA Today* and received a Reader's Choice Award …… .**The world's longest light-rail line just got longer.** Erin Rode writing in *SFGate*, on October. 1, 2025, says that the LA Metro debuted on Friday, September 19 its long-awaited "A Line" extension, adding stops in Glendora, San Dimas, La Verne, and Pomona. Even before the new 9-mile addition, the A Line was the longest light-rail line in the world. Now it is approximately 58 unbroken miles in length extending from Pomona to Long Beach. Pacific Electric, which stopped running the eastern portion of the line in 1951 has come alive again in a massive feat. County residents can now travel between the two cities for just $1.75 on trains that run roughly every 8 minutes. People in inland Los Angeles County can take the light-rail cars to the beach; people living in Los Angeles proper can commute out to universities, the state's largest water park, and the annual LA County Fair in Pomona.

Detroit-Windsor Connection

The Amtrak website contains an interesting Amtrak slide presentation dated May 6, 2025 concerning Canadian border crossings. The presentation covered work underway at four existing US-Canada rail connection on the routes of the *Amtrak Cascades*, *Adirondak*, *Maple Leaf*, and the *Vermonter.* Work underway at these crossings primarily concerns establishing preclearance customs facilities on the Canadian side for international passengers and extending the *Vermonter* 69 miles from St. Albans, VT, to Montreal.

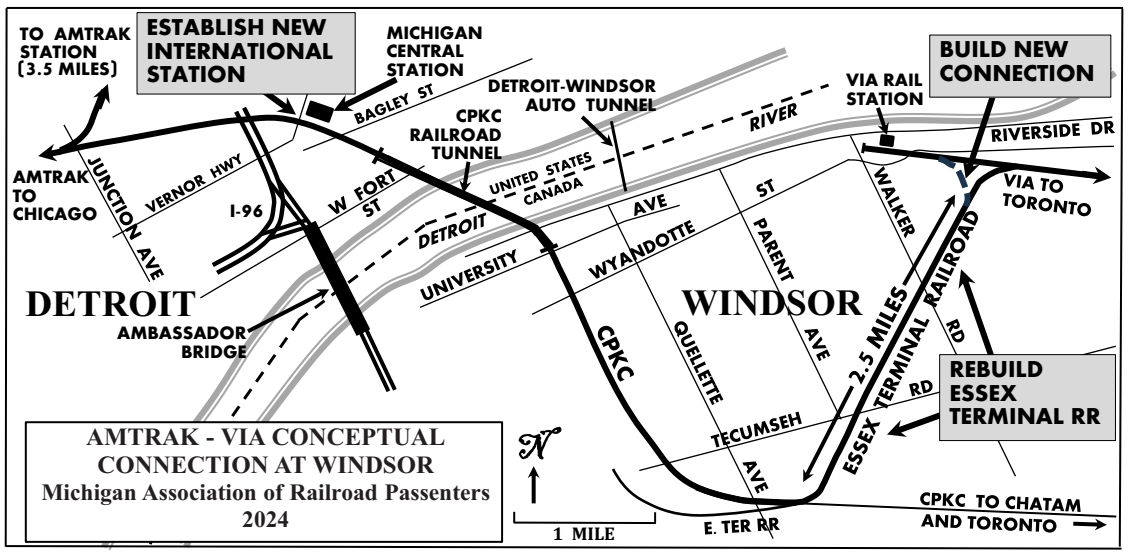
For the proposed *Wolverine* border crossing between Detroit and Windsor, information in the presentation indicates that the project is moving ahead slowly through the FRA Corridor Identification program. Many meetings have occurred involving an extremely large number of stakeholders. Amtrak has provided preliminary designs to border and customs agencies for review and received initial comments from the US Customs and Border Protection. Agreements have been secured from the host railroads (Conrail, CPKC, CN, and the Essex Terminal Railroad).

Funding for improvements in US has been secured through the State of Michigan and Amtrak. Preliminary design and cost estimates for improvements in Windsor are complete. A business case was provided by VIA Rail to Transport Canada in the fall 2024 and VIA submitted a federal budget request at that time for improvements in Windsor,

Basically, *Wolverine* Train 350 would be rerouted at West Detroit Junction on Junction Avenue to a new station to be constructed near Ford's Michigan Central campus. It would then pass through the CPKC tunnel and over a rebuilt Essex Terminal Railroad to terminate in Windsor at the Via Rail Station on Walker Road. (See map at right) Customs would be handled at a new customs facility to be built near the Via Windsor Station. For the return trip, *Wolverine* Train 355 would be modified to run from the customs facility in Windsor to Detroit and Chicago. This would leave *Wolverine* Trains 351, 352, 353, and 354 to serve the Detroit-Pontiac portion of the *Wolverine* route.

Late Breaking News: According to a report in the *Detroit Free Press* on October 16th, Michigan Governor Whitmer announced on October 15, that MDOT had signed a memorandum of understanding with the city of Detroit and Ford's Michigan Central campus to commit $40 million for research and engineering of a "multi-modal transportation hub." It would be built next door to the station (in the area west of Vernor Highway suggested by MARP). The announcement was made during a visit to the in the station's elaborately restored lobby during a special fall event hosted for the Downtown Detroit Partnership. The planned hub would bring passenger rail service back to the station area for the first time since 1988, by extending the Chicago-Detroit Amtrak line into Windsor to connect with Via trains to Toronto. The hub also would offer intercity bus service. Detroit's current Amtrak station in New Center would remain in service.

The goal is to finish design work for the new rail line in 2026 and finish building it by 2029, according to Arun Rao, an Amtrak executive who also spoke at the meeting. The new service still needs funding from the Canadian government of about $50 million in Canadian dollars for design and construction. Michigan's $40 million commitment would come from a $10 million federal grant and $30 million in state funds.



Michigan DOT Rail Projects

Michigan Department of Transportation Rail Projects

Status As of September 11, 2025

	Project	Type of Work	Federal Grant Source	FRA Stage	Total Cost ($)	Federal Grant ($)	Status
1	Battle Creek Connection	Eng & Environ	2019 CRISI	Develop.	1.5M	0.75M	Complete in 2025
2	MI Line Bridge Reconstruction	Eng & Environ	2021 SOGR	Develop.	2.1M	1.5M	Work in Progress
3	MI Line Signal Upgrade	Construction	2019 SOGR	Implement.	13.5M	6.5zM	Work in Progress
4	Safety Enhancement	Construction	2020 CRISI	Implement.	31.2M	15.6M	Work in Progress
5	Jackson Curve Modifications	Construction	2020 SOGR	Implement.	28.8M	14.4M	Work in Progress
7	Ann Arbor-Owosso Track and Bridge Rehabilitation	Construction	2021 SOGR	Implement.	42.7M	21.3M	Work in Progress
9	Manistee River Bridge Replace.	Construction	2022 CRISI	Implement.	34.0M	20.2M	Work in Progress
10	Detroit/Pontiac-Chicago Development Plan (Includes Detroit-Windsor Connection)	Planning	2022 CID	Planning (Step 1)	0.5M	0.5M	Work in Progress
11	Port Huron-Chicago Development Plan	Planning	2022 CID	Planning (Step 1)	0.5M	0.5M	Work in Progress
12	Grand Rapids-Chicago Development Plan	Planning	2022 CID	Planning (Step 1)	0.5M	0.5M	Work in Progress

SOURCE: MDOT CRISI - Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements
SOGR - State of Good Repair CID - FRA Corridor Identification.

Other notes provided by MDOT:

• Projects 1, 3, 5. and 9. The environmental clearance and preliminary engineering work will be substantially complete in 2025. (This is required for the FRA to obligate construction funds.)

• Projects 2, 4, and 7. Environmental clearance and preliminary engineering work is underway at present.

• Coaling Tower Removal. MDOT is working with Amtrak on the removal of two coaling towers on the Michigan Corridor. (See article in this issue of the MP)

• South of the Lake. MDOT is working with Amtrak, the FRA, other states, host railroads, and other stakeholders to finalize an alternative analysis to reflect a common understanding. This will be the basis for a FRA Service Development Plan for this very complex project.

• Second Track between Niles and Glennwood Road. MDOT is matching federal funds for environmental clearance, preliminary engineering, and final design. This second track, about 17 miles in length, was removed by Penn Central in the 1970s while single-tracking most of the Michigan Central mainline across Michigan.

• WATCO Acquistion of Great Lakes Central. MDOT reviewed the proposed acquisition of the state owned railroad and commented favorably.

• Union Pacific Acquisition of Norfolk Southern. MDOT observes that NS owns about 100 miles of railroad in Michigan and has trackage rights on the Michigan Corridor between Dearborn and Kalamazoo, and freight service rights between Porter and Kalamazoo.

• Coast to Coast. MDOT has started working with a consultant to develop a Detroit-Lansing-Grand Rapids route through the FRA Corridor Identification Program. (See separate article.)

• Detroit Multimodal Station. MDOT received approval from the FRA to transfer the $10M grant received about 2022 for the Detroit Amtrak Station on Woodward Avenue to a new location. A location review is under way.

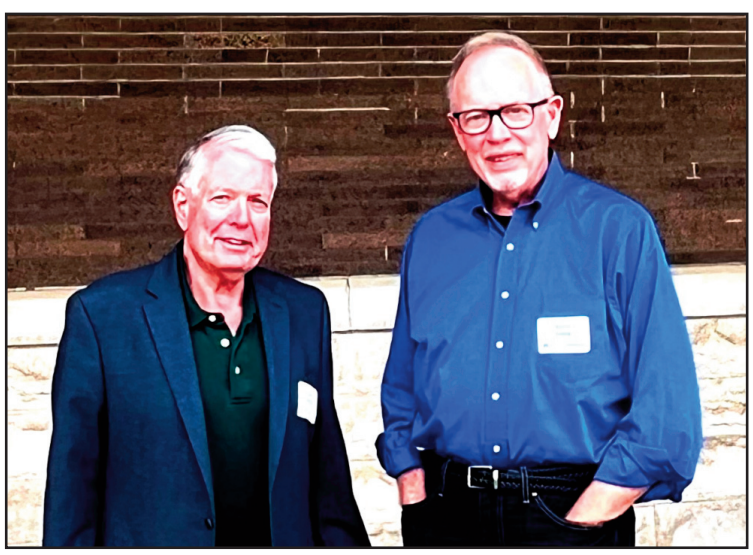
• Other Projects. MDOT is involved in other rail projects not involving passenger service.

MARP sincerely appreciates this information from MDOT

Annual meeting Continued

an walkway across the Canadian National (CN) mainline at the depot. This was the result of working with their local Michigan legislator and CN. The crossing will include safety devices such as gates, lights, and warning sounds. It should be installed in 2026 and will greatly improve access to the museum.

The business portion of the meeting followed. The treasurer reported that we have 220 members as of the meeting date. The long awaited revisions to the MARP bylaws was the subject of a lengthy discussion led by Vice Chair Ted Wojcik. The revisions include simplifying the wording and removing text that was confusing and obsolete. Questions from the attendees primarily concerned the number and types of meetings, and the quorum needed for approval of amendments. MARP members in attendance voted approval with a vote of 33 to 1.



Guest speakers Kevin Mckinney and Kevin P. Keefe

Growth in Passenger Rail Noted for Chicago Hub

Passengers boarding a Chicago Hub train at Alton, Illinois. (Chaddick Institute photo)

Amtrak ridership at the Chicago Hub is growing strongly, but capacity constraints will slow growth according to a report by the Chaddick Institute at DePaul University. The report by Joseph P. Schwieterman released on August 28, 2025 said that the Chicago Hub is outperforming other U.S. regions in passenger traffic growth this year.

Some key points from the report include:

• The Chicago Hub is outperforming peer regions driven by strong Amtrak demand.

• State governments in the Midwest states around Chicago deserve credit for acquiring new Venture coaches and locomotives for regional routes. Their number, however, is proving insufficient to meet demand.

• Expected passenger miles of travel should grow by around 7% over the next two years. This will outpace the 2.6% projected growth for U.S. auto travel through 2027.

• During the first nine months of Amtrak's fiscal year 2025 ridership on state supported Amtrak trains through Chicago Union Station (CUS) rose by 8% compared to the same nine-month period the previous year, despite ongoing equipment shortages.

• Between 2026 and 2027 traffic on state-supported Chicago Hub trains will grow by an estimated 10% spurred by increases in demand pushing traffic above pre-pandemic levels.

• Between 2028 and 2030 expected capacity gains should be only incremental.

• Amtrak, has largely overcome the worker shortage it experienced in the early post-pandemic years

Among several recommended actions are:

• State governments should redouble their efforts to facilitate capacity expansion on existing trains.

• If Amtrak's Horizon cars are brought back into service and new Aero trainsets free up Amfleet cars, states should push for a significant number of these cars to be allocated to the Chicago Hub.

• State agencies should establish priorities to avoid elongating the timeline of service expansions.

Very Late Trains Raise Red Flags

Recently many passengers have been greatly delayed and their trip ruined by extremely late Amtrak trains in Michigan. Two examples have been noted in the month of August. On August 1, Train 355 was 9 hours late arriving in Chicago. On August 15, Train 352 was also about 9 hours late in getting to Chicago. These were widely reported in the news media and the extreme discomfort and frustration of the passengers described in detail.

In both August incidents, the cause of the delays appeared to be the sensors on the Siemens locomotives, which did not allow the train to move except by using extraordinary procedures. This has been an ongoing problem with the new Siemens locomotives ever since their introduction in Michigan several years ago. The result has been continual delays in getting down the line on many days, and occasionally very late trains.

MARP is unsure why these disasters have persisted for so long. Reportedly Amtrak has new sensors on order and will replace the existing sensors when the parts arrive. MARP wonders if the new parts will really fix all the problems. We wonder if these locomotives are too sensitive for real time operations. We ask why over-ride switches could not added to the sensors for emergency situations. We also think Amtrak should have much better procedures in place to handle stuck trains. This should include using freight locomotives (which are present along Michigan routes) to pull the train to Chicago or at least to a station or other location where the passengers could be safely removed and wait for alternative transportation.

MARP has added a second Government Affairs Coordinator to work with specifically with Amtrak and MDOT to help resolve these issues. We sincerely hope very late trains will soon become a thing of the past.

MDOT To Study Detroit-Grand Rapids/Holland Route

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is beginning to develop a plan for a new passenger train route that would connect Detroit with and Grand Rapids and Holland. Commonly known as the "Coast to Coast" route, this would be a fourth Amtrak route in Michigan. According to a report in the September 26 issue of *Bridge Michigan*, MDOT and a consultant (yet to be identified) will develop the route and interact with stakeholders along the route. MDOT Director Bradley Wieferech indicated that the study should start in the spring of 2026.

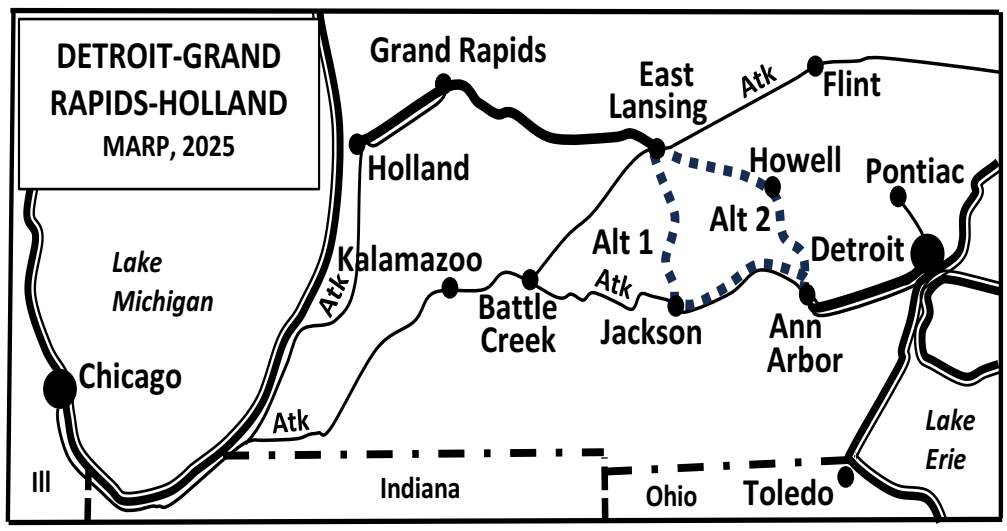
This route basically would be the old C&O Detroit-Grand Rapids passenger route, the only principal inter-city route operating in Michigan in 1971 at the start of Amtrak that is not served by Amtrak today. As shown on the map at right, the route would follow the existing Amtrak line from Detroit to Ann Arbor. At Ann Arbor, two alternative routes are identified. Either the proposed route would turn north to Howell and East Lansing or continue west to Jackson and turn north to Lansing. West of East Lansing, the proposed route follows CSX to Grand Raids and Holland.

"We want to make sure this route works in context with all of our other passenger rail services," said Wieferech. A conceptual schedule is shown below with two daily round trips between Detroit and Grand Rapids/Holland. Although the new route would touch on three Amtrak routes in Michigan, meaningful connections at any of these routes would be difficult to set up. However, as shown in the conceptual table, the probable morning and evening times at Detroit could provide good connections if one pair of the new trains was extended south 59 miles to Toledo to connect with the Amtrak trains to New York, Washington, Miami, and the east coast.

The idea to construct a coast-to-coast rail line has been around for years, MARP Chair Tom Fletcher said in the *Bridge Michigan* article. "We think it's a great idea linking some of the largest cities in the state together on a common rail route. It just makes too much sense," Fletcher said. The rail line would be helpful for traveling Michigan college students and make it easier for people who need medical care to get to hospitals.

Concerning the alternative segments between East Lansing and Ann Arbor, the alternative via Howell would serve a rapidly growing area north of Ann Arbor, but would require construction of an expensive, curving bridge at Ann Arbor to connect with the railroad to Howell. The alternative via Jackson could be readily implemented, but it could not use the present East Lansing Amtrak Station, since the Jackson line connects with CSX 2.5 miles to the west in Lansing.

When the C&O operated the trains before Amtrak, the route extended east from Lansing to Detroit through Plymouth on what is now CSX. Although this route is still in place, it would not serve Ann Arbor, which is a major goal of the existing proposal.



CONCEPTUAL SCHEDULE

Toledo/Detroit - Holland

Train A	Train B	Mls				Train C	Train D
	800a	0	Lv	Toledo	Ar		845p
	830a	26	↓	Monroe	↑		815p
	915a	59	Ar	Detroit	Lv		735p
535p	930a	0	Lv	Detroit	Ar	1038a	720p
612p	1004a	24	|	Plymouth	↑	1004a	640p
644p	1036a	54	|	Howell	|	930a	611p
727p	1118a	87	|	Lansing	|	858a	539p
800p	1149a	120	|	Lake Odessa	|	820a	504p
835p	1120a	152	↓	Grand Rapids	|	745a	430p
915p	100p	177	Ar	Holland	Lv	705a	350p

Travel time requirements and mileage based in part on Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad timetable in Official Guide of October 1958. MARP, 2025.

Possible Connecting Trains at Toledo

Train 40	508a		Ar	Toledo	Lv	Train 41	1149p
(Train from Washinton/Miami)						(Train to Wash/Miami)	
Train B	800a		Lv	Toledo	Ar	Train D	845p

Train 49	613a		Ar	Toledo	Lv	Train 48	331a
(Train from New York)						(Train to New York)	
Train B	800a		Lv	Toledo	Ar	Train D	845p